

Washington, DC -- The City of Newburgh will soon receive new tools to combat the drug crime and gang violence. U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that Orange County has received the federal High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) designation they requested and have lobbied for since May 2010. The designation, granted by President Obama's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), will enhance coordination of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies by providing equipment, technology and additional resources to combat the drug trafficking on which these gangs thrive.

"For too long, the drug trade has served as a financial lifeline for area criminals – helping to finance the gangs perpetrating violent crime that is plaguing Newburgh city streets. Orange County deserves every federal resource possible to combat the growing scourge of drug trafficking," said Schumer. "I'm pleased that the White House has issued this designation, and will continue to do everything I can to bring more resources to the City of Newburgh to help fight violent and drug-related crime."

"There is nothing more important than the security of our communities," said Senator Gillibrand. "The drug rings in our communities only exacerbate the gang problem that is also on the rise. Designating Orange County as a HIDTA is a long term commitment for a stronger partnership between federal, state, and local law enforcement to deliver additional tools and resources to keep our streets secure. I'm proud that together with Senator Schumer and Congressman Hinchey, we were able to provide the resources we need on the ground to keep our communities safe and drug-free."

"This is a great victory for the residents of Newburgh who have become the unfortunate victims of drug and gang violence," said Hinchey. "This designation is going to help address the drug and gang violence that has left its mark on Newburgh so that the city can experience the revitalization it desperately needs. Just as we saw with the historic raids that took place a little over a year ago, when local, state and federal crime fighters work together, we can fight back against the growing gang violence. Securing this designation was a team effort, and I'm so glad we got it done."

The three federal legislators worked together for over a year to secure the designation. In May 2010, the trio, along with former Congressman John Hall (D-NY) wrote to Chauncey Parker, Director of the

NY/NJ HIDTA, requesting the designation. They followed up that request with a letter to R. Gil Kerlikowske, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in August 2010.

Under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and the ONDCP Reauthorization Act of 1998, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is authorized to designate areas that exhibit serious drug trafficking problems as HIDTAs. HIDTA-designated counties comprise approximately 14 percent of U.S. counties, and exist in 45 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

Relative to other municipalities across the country, Newburgh has seen disproportionately high rates of assaults and murders per capita in the last several years, making the city among the most violent in the nation per capita. The violence in this small city of 29,000 residents is so pronounced that it has drawn the attention of the Obama administration.

Law enforcement organizations within HIDTAs assess drug trafficking problems and design specific initiatives to reduce or eliminate the production, manufacture, transportation, distribution and chronic use of illegal drugs and money laundering. Through a combination of joint initiatives and resource and information sharing, the HIDTA program helps improve the effectiveness of drug control efforts.

Schumer, Gillibrand and Hinchey have also encouraged the FBI to consider the City of Newburgh as a potential site for the Bureau's Hudson Valley field office and have invited FBI Director Robert S. Mueller to tour the city to learn of progress that has been made and also see firsthand the need for additional federal resources.